

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON
TUESDAY 21 August 2018 AT 3.00PM AT HOTEL COACHMAN, FITZHERBERT AVE,
PALMERSTON NORTH**

1. Present:

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Malcolm Francis, Chris O’Meara, Marc Flaws, Dan Waechter, Andrew Morris, Simon Muckley, Andy Tannock, Don Scott, Paul Shortis, Jim Cook.

2. In Attendance:

Staff: Phil Teal (Manager), Hamish Carnachan, Matt Kavermann, Sue Wray (part), Adam Canning (part).
Licenceholders: Lee Cook, Roger Smaile, Ian Taylor, Dave McEwan, Ken Cook, Jim Hale, Jack Dowds (part), Professor Russell Death.

3. Apologies:

Councillors Eric Neumann, Brad Johnson, ,
Staff: Peter Wilson, Adam Canning (part)
Licenceholders: Jason Johnstone, Paul Browne

It was then moved that:

the apologies be accepted.

Malcolm Francis/Chris O’Meara

Carried

Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed members of the public. He indicated that there was time allocated for opportunities for the public to speak on specific items.

4. Conflicts of Interest

A list was available for viewing of the existing declarations of Conflicts of Interest. No new conflicts of interest were declared.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 12 June 2018

After a brief discussion it was moved that:

the Minutes of the Meeting of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 12 June 2018 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Don Scott /Dan Waechter

Carried

It was noted that two items that were considered towards the end of the 12 June 2018 meeting needed confirmation due to quorum requirements.

It was then moved that

The Management Report for the period 16 March – 31 May 2018 be received.

Dan Waechter/Paul Shortis

Carried

It was then moved that

The Expenditure Report for period till 30 June 2018 and transactions for the months of May and June be received and approved.

Paul Shortis /Dan Waechter

Carried

6. Matters Arising

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the internal contestable funding process where the remuneration review had initially postponed the consideration of salary increases. NZ Council had subsequently confirmed that the budget adjustments for salaries from reserves for the 2018/19 financial year, with already confirmed CPI adjustments being relinquished.

7. NZ Council Business – Meeting 19 July 2018

Councillor Morris confirmed that North Canterbury Fish & Game Council had elected Ron Stewart as their new appointee.

NZ Council acknowledged the Queens Birthday honour bestowed on NZ Councillor Matthew Hall being made a Member of the NZ Order of Merit.

Councillor Morris informed Council that there were currently audits being planned or conducted on three Fish & Game regions: North Canterbury (initiated by five North Canterbury councillors regarding how a bequeath was accounted for and used), Central South Island (directed by the Minister and carried out by NZF&GC regarding dealing with appropriate treatment of conflicts of interest), and Hawke's Bay (directed by the Minister with DOC and NZF&GC undertaking audit to consider that appropriate treatment of conflicts of interest and perceived high staff turnover).

Councillor Morris outlined the new mallard research project that focused on data mining to determine what conditions produce the most duckling in terms of habitat and nesting success parameters.

Councillor Morris noted that \$4000 would be allocated from the Staff Development Grant to fund a keynote speaker at the Wetland Symposium at Napier in September 2018.

Councillor Morris noted that in the upcoming election requirements there is a section specifically relating to Candidate Conflict of Interest Statement in the election biography.

Councillor Morris indicated that the Licence Working Party had been tasked to investigating the licence category ratios to establish a reinstatement of up to 1800 LEQs income. After discussion it was moved

That a letter be sent to NZ Council seeking a comprehensive and objective review to fish licence categories and their pricing be undertaken as was originally envisaged at the end of three years of their introduction.

Paul Shortis / Andy Tannock

Carried

Jack Dowds arrived at 3.20pm and noted that he was a candidate for the upcoming Horizons Regional Council by-election.

Councillor Morris confirmed that the commercial issues of the Fish & Game NZ Magazine were to be discontinued – which had been operating at an annual loss of \$80,000. Clarification was sought as to whether there was a wider strategy in the decision making behind the action or more simply a cost saving – as there was widespread support from keen anglers that were considered ‘influencers’. Councillor Morris noted the magazine had been purchased by Fairfax to retain the logo and editorial content, and it had been hoped it would make money but it hasn’t. Councillor Waechter considered that there was a sense of pre-determined action to withdraw commercial options given little effort to publicise the magazine, review the business model including review of sale cost. Councillor Morris noted that the advertising had been substantially cannibalised but the Hunting & Fishing Retail Catalogue, and magazine subscriptions alone could not sustain the production of commercial issues. Councillor Shortis questioned whether there had been substantial discussions by NZ Council on options to keep the commercial issues viable, other than the current model that wasn’t commercially viable. Councillor Morris confirmed that any discussions were held in-committee due to commercial sensitivities. Councillor O’Meara considered that due diligence should have been conducted. Councillor Tannock noted that other options to maintain a key communication channel should have been investigated, but it appeared that alternatives were not considered in the ultimate decision. Councillor Shortis noted that there was a potential to use this to build a platform for the R3 programme (retention aspect) but this didn’t appear to be considered in the wider context of Fish & Game communications. Councillor Morris suggested that this may be a topic of discussion in future NZ F&GC meetings.

Discussion then focused on the wider national strategy, and more specific strategies relating to RMA activities, National communications strategy, and the R3 Strategy/Marketing Strategy. This could provide context of specific decisions and provide a better understanding of a position in terms of the wider strategy. It was then moved that

Wellington Fish & Game Council send a letter to NZ Council seeking explanation of how the removal of commercial issues of the Fish & Game NZ Magazine fits into the R3 and communications programme to provide context as to how this reconfiguration fits into a wider strategy

Paul Shortis/Malcolm Francis

Carried

It was noted that Councillor Morris voted against the motion.

Councillor Scott noted that Wellington Fish & Game Council provided accrual accounts to NZF&GC which was consistent with what is required, whereas some regions provide cash basis account reporting. He also noted that there had been some alterations to the bank authority authorization at NZ Council, which Councillor Morris explained was to procure the best interest rates at another bank should it be favourable to do so.

It was then moved that

The report by Councillor Morris on the NZ Fish & Game Council meeting held on 19 July 2018 be received.

Chris O'Meara/Andy Tannock

Carried

8. Public Participation

Chairman Cotsilinis invited members of the public to speak on any particular issues.

Chairman Cotsilinis confirmed that the Fish & Game elections were upcoming and encouraged potential candidates to stand. He noted that nominations closed at the end of August, and that these were now required in the form of an editable word document rather than scanned pdf documents.

Roger Smaile noted that NZ Council's communications appeared to continue to pick out on transgressions of farmers, but left Fish & Game exposed as a media target from the rural community. He noted that recent media statements on farm dumps on face value didn't warrant Fish & Game comment as they weren't widespread or important enough. Council noted that this had been discussed previously, with it explained that Regional Council inaction on compliance was the key messaging and that emphasis needed to change to ensure the messaging was clear.

Jack Dowds considered that the Horizons Regional Council was not doing enough monitoring given the “D grade” compliance report recently publicised by Forest and Bird. He considered that the compliance operation at regional councils needed to be more thorough and randomized.

Jim Hale also noted the messaging appeared to be anti-farming on face value, but that NZ Council CE had acknowledged the messaging could be managed better.

9. Health & Safety Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Health & Safety reporting. Mr Teal noted that the Palmerston North City Council had concluded their investigation that the recent incident of petrochemical odours entering the building via an internal sewer was an isolated event caused by a blockage in the City sewer network. It was then moved that

The Health & Safety Report for June and July be received

Malcolm Francis/Chris O’Meara

Carried

10. 2018/19 Draft Annual Plan

Chairman Cotsilinis provided an overview of the process for the draft Annual Plan and invited comment on the final draft presented.

Minor erratum on section 3 paragraph 1 first sentence 13 councillors not 11 councillors

It was then moved

To adopt the 2018/19 Annual Plan Council for Wellington Fish & Game Council

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

11. Fish & Game R3/Marketing Update

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of interest from various regions and how this had been progressed to date. He noted that Wellington region had been actively participating in establishing an inventory on what is being done (in terms of R3 context) and defining an initiative for the Hutt River. Councillor Waechter noted caution in over promoting the Hutt River resource as over harvest and low flow summer conditions could affect population numbers.

Discussion ensued on how R3 programme could be used to focus on increasing revenues for hunting and fishing. This could involve focusing on promoting a particular resource such as the South Island water races, or promoting recruitment of children fishing opportunities. Councillor Francis considered the approach to children’s fishing opportunities needed

developing as currently children under 12 required no licence, could get 'success' at an organised fish out day, but there was a gap in getting this cohort consistently fishing on the local waters. He considered that more effort needed to be undertaken to get their parents involved to shift focus into continuing once teenagers. Councillor Muckley noted this concept of recruitment used in many sports, by getting a large number of potential participants at the bottom of the 'participation pyramid' but being adaptable to retaining them in the pursuit. This may involve different approaches such as using social media. Councillor Tannock offered his support to be involved in any subcommittee or working groups.

It was then moved

To receive the report on the Fish & Game R3 Marketing programme for August 2018

Dan Waechter/Andrew Morris

Carried

12. Hatchery and Stocking Review (Cawthron Institute Report)

Chairman Cotsilinis provided a brief overview of the findings in the report prepared by an independent expert (Cawthron Institute) noting the key findings: put and take stocking is useful if returns are reasonable, supplementing wild stock generally isn't recommended as rather than artificially increasing numbers may increase intraspecies competition. This confirmed Wellington region's policy of not releasing substantial numbers into riverine systems. Councillor Shortis considered that an understanding as to why fisheries are declining is a much more sustainable approach rather than supplementing numbers of fish with poor efficacy on population sustainability.

It was moved that

Wellington Fish & Game Council support the independent review by Cawthron Institute on trout hatcheries and stocking policies which was based on technical analysis – particularly for existing fishery populations. There were instances where these releases could be justified such as for research purposes.

Dan Waechter/Malcolm Francis

Carried

13. Council Performance Information Reporting – Office Auditor General

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the work that the Office of Auditor General had been undertaking for Fish & Game on what was being reported and how to improve the quality of reporting. This involved focusing on signs of good practice rather than the current detail presented by regions. The report was received and noted that changes in reporting may occur in the 2018/19 financial year.

- 14. Lake Omanu – Review of Activities and Draft Management Plan**
Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the lake which is substantially owned by Fish & Game thereby so has absolute management authority – and is the site for the junior hunter programme. He indicated that staff had met with the junior programme co-ordinator Jason Johnstone to identify management requirements, and went through the recommended action list in the draft management plan. He noted that potential funding opportunities included reparation reserve, or reviewing the current grazing lease but the latter was not likely to be substantial. Councillor Tannock noted that the Manawatu Fish & Game Club had some funds available and/or volunteer resources to potentially assist. Councillor Waechter also suggested that the bird viewers could contribute if a robust relationship was developed. Other opportunities such as coarse fishing could be considered depending what the fish populations were at the lake. Staff were requested to continue to investigate costings, undertake urgent actions, and bring back to Council for funding considerations.
- 15. Research Project – using eDNA for detecting trout presence and spawning activity**
Dr Canning provided a brief overview of the progress of the research project whereby Massey University had defined the primer DNA which is used to match samples, and field collections of water samples were being undertaken to refine the technique. The focus was now on the amount of water that needed to be collected to detect species eDNA and nuclear DNA, including filter size for processing.
- 16. Merit Awards for Recognition of Contributions to Fish & Game – Professor Death**
Chairman Cottilinis presented Professor Russell Death with a merit award for his contribution to providing science and technical advice to maintain water quality and ecosystem health. His work on various key planning forums in NZ on regional plans provided expert technical evidence to support a logical planning approach. Professor Death had also provided outstanding mentoring to the future generation of science providers.
- [Acclamation]
- 17. Submission on Long Term Plans for Regional Councils**
Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the submissions made to regional councils on their long term planning process and attendance at formal hearings. Topics included: freshwater quality, flood control operations, incorporating wetlands into a rural landscape, biodiversity – fish management, Water Wairarapa funding, fish habitat management, and

funding mix alternatives. The responses from Horizons Regional Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council were briefly discussed.

It was then moved that

The report on the submissions on the long term planning processes undertaken by regional council be received

Chris O'Meara/Jim Cook

Carried

18. Greater Wellington Regional Council Western River Consents Applications

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of progress that has been made in recent months. GWRC had employed a consultant to peer review the Code Of Practice which has been useful in fine tuning that document. More recently DoC have become more actively involved late in the process. It appears that GWRC may decide to separate out the different river systems to enable the applications to be processed in a timely manner at hearings.

It was moved that

The report on the Greater Wellington Regional Council western river consents applications be received

Dan Waechter/Marc Flaws

Carried

19. One Plan Implementation Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of what Horizons Regional Council are publicly indicating to stakeholders on potential plan changes. The initial focus on Plan Change 2 will be the nitrogen leaching table (Table 14.2) but they are indicating that further plan changes will be required to propose ways to resolve other implementation issues – requiring “ a lot more evidence and public input”.

It is intended that Fish & Game, EDS, and Horizons will meet to discuss both the Table 14.2 review and additional consenting pathways in September/October using independent Minister appointed facilitators.

It was then moved

To receive the report on the One Plan Implementation Project

Jim Cook/Andrew Morris

Carried

20. Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project Update

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of current situation – whereby large scale irrigation projects were no longer being subsidised by Crown Irrigation unless already progressed or agreed to. However, under the Long Term Plan GWRC

had allocated \$200,000 for further work in the 2018/19 Financial Year, and local District Councils had allocated a total of \$80,000 to continue work on reservoir establishment for urban water supply. A separate company has been established to continue work on the dam proposal which would be funded by industry user groups.

GWRC could be requested for a detailed breakdown of what exactly would be funded from their contribution and confirmation that there would be no further funds expended beyond the 2018/19 financial year. There were also the issues of intellectual property of what had been undertaken using public funds and whether this was being made available to the private company (and at what cost).

Councillor Waechter questioned how the Whaitua Committee report would impact on the feasibility of the dam proposal. Councillor Shortis noted that their fundings could be largely ignored until the time of a plan change, where all parties could substantially change an aspirational position by the Whaitua Committee. There had been some disquiet from the farming community regarding water takes and also the District Council Mayors had publicly expressed that their emphasis for management had not been adequately addressed.

Mr Teal expressed appreciation of Councillor Shortis who had attended the Whaitua Committee's public presentations. The final report with implementation plan would be presented to GWRC in September.

Jack Dowds left the meeting at 5.00pm

Councillor Shortis noted that the Wairarapa dam proponents had still disregarded the environmental effects analysis and must keep them aware of Fish & Game's concerns regarding intensification. Other options for land management focusing on dryland farming practices might be useful for public awareness for regional development initiatives.

21. Lake Wairarapa Update

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the draft JK Donald Management Plan developed by Wildlands Consultants initially to deal with grazing issues, but provided a much larger project potential for replanting. Councillor Tannock noted that hunting was acknowledged as an activity, with water reticulation and tracks kept open. Mr Teal expressed concern as to the prioritisation of any works with water level management the key to long term sustainability.

The briefing of an incoming Reserve Governance Board and communication strategy developed also provided focus on the narrow range of groups involved to control messaging.

It was moved that

The report on issues at Lake Wairarapa be received

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

Ken Cook arrived a 5.15pm

22. Mallard Project Update

Mr Teal noted the mallard project application made by the principal researchers to further develop work on brood habitat selection and use. Dr Kavermann sought more specific outcomes on what could Fish & Game use as management outcomes and change anything that was being done on-ground. Councillor Tannock was hoping for a template for landowners to shape banks, maintain ephemeral wetlands, and planting. There still appeared to be a disconnect with communications with the project, and its wider value to hunters and landowners is yet to be attained.

23. Junior/ Novice Participation

Fish in Schools:

Hamish Carnachan gave a brief overview of the various issues/success of the participating schools including how it unfolds and issues that arise from different teachers in schools. He considered that we may have reached a ceiling on the number of units with the current arrangement of staff resources and volunteers. Staff had also introduced a new school in Pahiatua who had a skilled and enthusiastic teacher participating. Councillor Waechter noted that the educators could potentially use a common blog site to exchange ideas with participating schools, which could help in mentoring and management of common issues.

Jack Dowds returned to meeting a 5.30pm.

Research Hatchery:

Councillor Shortis provided an overview of the investigations into reinstating the Masterton Hatchery in some capacity:

- (1) He noted some material issues regarding security and vandalism which in itself is a major barrier for large scale investment. There were also two external tanks that would need to be set up that were compliant with health and safety requirements once containing water. Capital expenditure could be in the order of \$50,000.

- (2) He noted that there is some interest amongst university researchers and iwi on research but there were no active proposals for funding grants, so there is still potential for funding in the future.
- (3) Staff time to man (even part time) was not feasible with the current staff resourcing and would need to be covered separately.
- (4) There were three possibilities for Fish & Game benefit: research, trout stock at completion used for fish out ponds, trout used to stock lakes/streams to supplement natural recruitment.

It therefore appears that at the moment it is not feasible and a letter to iwi, and Trust would indicate this, but an active review dependent on potential research funding opportunities would continue.

Fish Out Ponds:

Otaraua, Waikanae - over 400 submissions were made to the site with many actively supporting a fish out pond at the irrigation pond site. We want to see the raw data from the consultations as the Kapiti Coast District Council are discussing all options at an iwi workshop prior to putting recommendations to their full Council.

Otaki Pond:

GWRC and Winstones have been actively consulting to establish any contouring works for a fish out pond/canal at the gravel extraction lake in Otaki. It is hoped this would be progressed before the end of the year for a possible fish out day early next year.

24. Access Issues

Mr Teal briefly outlined issues at:

- **Otaki River Mouth** –additional signage is unlikely to satisfy those opposed to hunting per se. GWRC will formalise the decision making criteria and process which will allow those opposed to hunting to leverage responses.
- **Pukepuke Lagoon** –iwi groups who have settlements at the site are currently considering how hunting fits into their mahinga kai principles. Status quo at present.
- **Forest Blocks** – possible requirements for public liability insurance in future
- **Biosecurity: Mycoplasma bovis / Sheep Measles**– possible issue for access for hunters and anglers to be aware of and how to interact with landholders in a compliant and respectful manner. A national response was request by NZ Council Communications Manager – pending.

25. Management Report 1 June to 31 July 2018

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of key project work streams undertaken by staff. Council reiterated their appreciation of the efforts made by staff in completing the work programme.

Wellington Water had requested all raw data from Fish & Game based on the historical relationship that they were part of Greater Wellington Regional Council. A request was made for a modest contribution for the data as it was required specifically for their resource consent conditions.

It was confirmed that the \$25 licence fee for the Wellington Backcountry endorsement and was anticipated to engender negative feedback from guides and operators.

It was then moved that

The Management Report for the period 1 June – 31 July 2018 be received.

Chris O'Meara/Malcolm Francis

Carried

Discussion ensued on the Indigenous Fish Bill with it agreed that a letter be sent to NZ Council expressing concerns over the potential ramifications of some of the clauses of the proposed Bill. It was also suggested that support from regional fish & Game involvement be made to ensure networks all levels can be used and experience of all staff be included in a working group rather than relying on one central approach.

26. Fish & Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal referred to the summary in the project report documents noting that licence sales for fish were now similar to previous year's sales, but Game licence sales were down about 87 LEQs.

It was moved that

The report on Fish Licence and Game Licence Sales to 31 July 2018 be received

Chris O'Meara/Malcolm Francis

Carried

27. Expenditure Report

After brief discussion on the Income and Expenditure Summary Report, Mr Teal explained the variances of budget compared to actual – mainly due to undertaking intensive project works in the Upper Rangitikei area for sampling.

After brief discussion it was moved

That the Expenditure Report to 30 June 2018 and Financial Transactions for May and June be received

Jim Cook/Chris O'Meara

Carried

28. Merit Awards for Recognition of Contributions to Fish & Game

Ken Cook:

Chairman Cotsilinis presented Ken Cook with a merit award for his contribution to volunteering in fish and game clubs and recruiting hunters to the pursuit over many decades. His contribution was acknowledged by many of those present.

[Acclamation]

Jim Hale:

Chairman Cotsilinis presented Jim Hale with a merit award for his contribution to freshwater fishing advocacy and contributions to local angling club activities such as the children's fish out day. His contribution was acknowledged by many of those present.

[Acclamation]

Sue Wray:

Chairman Cotsilinis presented Sue Wray with a merit award for her outstanding contribution to administration in the Wellington Fish and Game region over many years. Her diligence, hard work, and integrity have been exemplary over many years and will continue in the foreseeable future. The appreciation of her contributions were reiterated by many of those present.

[Acclamation]

29. Correspondence

Councillor Morris was questioned on correspondence sent to NZ Council and he confirmed that it had not been formally considered. Chairman Cotsilinis and Mr Teal were requested to obtain answers to this correspondence as it was important in determining the licence fee recommendation.

A request had been made for consideration of tenkara fishing style as it was becoming very popular in the United States. Wellington F&GC's current position is not to allow at the moment and this topic would be referred to NZ Council.

A licence holder had expressed a lack of hunting opportunity (duck numbers) and also noted potential hunting of hawks which is to be discouraged.

30. General Business

Councillor Waechter noted that the forestry operations in the Upper Hutt were 180ha in size and potentially six years for recovery including Blakies stream. He was concerned that fish numbers would not be adequately monitored in this stream or Pakuratahi River by the consent holder, GWRC, or Fish & Game to detect a change. Staff would check what is currently being monitored to ascertain if Fish & Game would need to undertake this independently if not a requirement of other parties.

There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 6.00pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Upper Hutt Cossie Club, 11 Logan Street, Upper Hutt, Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 3.00pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____